

Synodical Handbook
of the
Evangelical Lutheran Synod
of
Missouri, Ohio, and Other States

Compiled by Order of the Synod

Gal. 5, 1. 1 Cor. 14, 40

ENGLISH EDITION

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Constitution of the Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States.

Reasons for the Forming of a Synodical Union.

1. The example of the Apostolic Church. Acts 15, 1—31.
2. Our Lord's will that the diversities of gifts should be for the common profit. 1 Cor. 12, 4—31.

Article I. — Name.

The name of the Synod organized under this Constitution shall be: THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD OF MISSOURI, OHIO, AND OTHER STATES.

Article II. — Confession.

The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation: —

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practise;
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit, the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

Article III. — Object.

The objects of the Synod are: —

1. The conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4, 3—6; 1 Cor. 1, 10) and a united defense against schism and sectarianism (Rom. 16, 17);
2. The joint extension of the kingdom of God;

3. The training of ministers and teachers for service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church;

4. The publication and distribution of Bibles, church-books, school-books, religious periodicals, and other books and literature;

5. The endeavor to bring about the largest possible uniformity in church-practise, church-customs, and, in general, in congregational affairs;

6. The furtherance of Christian parochial schools, and of a thorough instruction for Confirmation;

7. The supervision of the ministers and teachers of the Synod with regard to the performance of their official duties;

8. The protection of pastors, teachers, and congregations in the performance of their duties and the maintenance of their rights.

Article IV. — Powers.

The Synod shall have legal powers —

1. To purchase, hold, administer, and sell property of every description in the interests of the Synod;

2. To accept, hold, administer, and, if deemed advisable, dispose of, legacies, donations, commercial papers, and legal documents of every description in the interest of its work.

Article V. — Membership.

Membership in the Synod is held and may be acquired by congregations, ministers of the Gospel, and teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church who confess and accept the confessional basis of Article II.

A. VOTING MEMBERS.

All organized congregations that have joined the Synod hold voting membership. At the meetings of the Districts of the Synod every congregation or parish is entitled to two votes, one of which is to be cast by the

pastor and the other by the lay delegate. At the meetings of the Synod a number of congregations shall form a group, which shall be represented by two voting delegates, one a pastor and one a lay delegate.

B. ADVISORY MEMBERS.

Advisory members only are the following: —

1. Pastors whose congregations do not hold membership in the Synod;
2. Assistant pastors;
3. Ministers not in charge of congregations;
4. Professors at the Synod's educational institutions;
5. Teachers of parochial schools;
6. Candidates for the office of the ministry or for that of a teacher in the parochial schools.

Article VI. — Conditions of Membership.

Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in Synod are: —

1. Acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II.
2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as —
 - a. Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the Church;
 - b. Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession;
 - c. Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities.
3. Regular call of pastors and teachers and regular election of lay delegates by the congregations, as also the blamelessness of the life of such.
4. Exclusive use of doctrinally pure agenda, hymn-books, and catechisms in church and school.
5. A congregation shall be received into membership only after the Synod has convinced itself that the constitution of the congregation, which must be submitted

for examination, contains nothing contrary to the Scriptures or the Confessions.

6. Pastors, teachers, candidates for the office of the ministry or that of a teacher in a parochial school not coming from recognized orthodox church-bodies must submit to a colloquium before being received.

7. Congregations, pastors, teachers, or candidates for the office of the ministry or that of a teacher in a parochial school are, as a rule, received at the meetings of the Districts of the Synod, but may be received also at the meetings of the Synod.

Article VII.

Relation of the Synod to Its Members.

In its relation to its members the Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of the Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God, or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.

Article VIII. — Synodical Meetings.

A. TIME AND LEGALITY OF MEETINGS.

1. The Synod convenes every three years for its regular meeting.

2. For a legal convention a constitutional convocation of the meeting and the presence of at least one-fourth of the constitutionally elected voting representatives is necessary.

B. SPECIAL SESSIONS OF THE SYNOD.

1. The Synod may, under circumstances, call a special session, if two-thirds of the voting representatives present so decide.

2. In cases of urgent necessity a special session may be called by the President with the consent of two-thirds of the District Presidents or by three-fourths of the District Presidents without the consent of the President; however, all congregations and other members of the Synod must be notified thirty days in advance and told for what purpose this extra meeting is being convened.

C. RESOLUTIONS AT SYNODICAL MEETINGS.

All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God. All other matters shall be decided by a majority vote. In case of a tie vote the President may cast the deciding vote.

Article IX. — Representation.

The synodical meetings are composed of regularly elected and delegated representatives and of certain individual persons, as specified in the By-Laws, to wit: —

1. Representatives of congregations, entitled to vote;
2. Advisory representatives of the advisory members of the Synod;
3. Advisory representatives of boards, commissions, and educational institutions, and such as by virtue of their office are required to attend the Synod.

Article X. — Officers.

A.

The officers of the Synod are: —

1. A President;
2. Vice-Presidents, as prescribed by the By-Laws;
3. A Secretary;
4. A Treasurer;
5. A Board of Directors;
6. Other officers, as specified in the By-Laws.

B.

1. The President, the Vice-Presidents, and the Secretary must be ministers of the Church and, like the Treasurer and the members of the Board of Directors, members of voting congregations.

2. The time of service of all the officers of the Synod extends from one regular session of the Synod until the next, or until their successors have been elected and have entered upon their respective offices.

3. Any officer or any member of any board or commission ceases to be an officer of the Synod or a member of any board or commission as soon as he ceases to be a member of a congregation affiliated with the Synod.

Article XI. — Rights and Duties of Officers.**A. IN GENERAL.**

1. The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod, and in everything pertaining to their rights and the performance of their duties they are responsible to the Synod.

2. The Synod at all times has the right to call its officers to account and, if circumstances require it, to remove them from office in accordance with Christian procedure.

3. The Synod reserves the right to abolish any office it has established.

4. Conventions of the Synod and the Districts have the right, in extraordinary cases, to elect a chairman other than the regular presiding officer.

B. DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT.

1. The President has the supervision regarding the doctrine and the administration of —

- a. All officers of the Synod;
- b. All such as are employed by the Synod;
- c. The individual Districts of the Synod;
- d. All District Presidents.

2. It is the President's duty to see to it that all the aforementioned act in accordance with the Synod's constitution, to admonish all who in any way depart from it, and, if such admonition is not heeded, to report such cases to the Synod.

3. The President has, and always shall have, the power to advise, admonish, and reprove. He shall conscientiously use all means at his command to promote and maintain unity of doctrine and practise in all the Districts of the Synod.

4. The President shall see to it that the resolutions of the Synod are carried out.

5. At the sessions of the Synod the President shall —

a. Conduct the meetings and have a care that all things be done in a Christian way and in accordance with the constitution of the Synod;

b. Give an accurate report to the Synod of his administration.

6. The President shall sign the official papers and documents in the name of the Synod.

7. It is the duty of the President to be present also at the meetings of the Districts, to advise them, and to report at the next session of the Synod.

8. The President shall perform all additional duties which the Synod may enjoin upon him through its By-Laws or by special resolution.

9. When business matters that permit of no delay turn up between conventions of the Synod, the President is authorized to submit them to a vote of the congregations by means of the official synodical organs. In such cases at least one-fourth of the synodical congregations must register their vote.

C. DUTIES OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS.

1. The Vice-Presidents shall, upon request of the President, represent him in all his functions.

2. In case of the disability, the deposition from office, or the death of the President, the Vice-Presidents, in the

order of their rank of office, advance to the President's place, with full power, until the expiration of his term of office.

D. DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY.

The Secretary shall —

1. Record the proceedings during the synodical conventions;
2. Draw up and sign the official papers and documents of the Synod;
3. Perform such other work as the Synod may enjoin upon him through its By-Laws or by special resolution.

E. DUTIES OF THE TREASURER.

The Treasurer is the custodian of all monies and valuable papers of the Synod and shall —

1. Keep an exact record of all monies received and expended by the Synod;
2. Administer the Synod's financial affairs according to its instruction;
3. At any time submit to an examination of his books and accounts by an auditing committee, when so ordered by the Synod or its officers.

F. DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

1. The Board of Directors shall consist of not fewer than seven members, to wit: the President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, one pastor, and three laymen.
2. The members of the Board of Directors are the legal representatives of the Synod and the custodians of all property of the Synod, and upon them are incumbent the general management and supervision of all the business affairs of the Synod.

Article XII.

Districts of the Synod and Their Regulation.

1. The Synod is divided into Districts, the geographical boundaries of which are determined by the Synod, and are altered by it according to circumstances.

2. This Constitution is also the constitution of each District of the Synod; however, each District is at liberty to adopt such by-laws and pass such resolutions as it deems expedient for its conditions, provided that such by-laws and resolutions do not conflict with the Constitution and the By-Laws of the Synod.

3. The officers of the Districts are: —

- a. A District President;
- b. District Vice-Presidents, as the By-Laws prescribe;
- c. As many Visitors as each District may determine upon;
- d. A District Secretary;
- e. A District Treasurer.

4. Additional officers, boards, and commissions are elected by the Districts as they are required for the execution of the business of the Districts.

5. The election of the District officers always takes place in the year following the regular session of the Synod.

6. All officers of the Districts have the same rights and duties as those outlined in this Constitution for the officers of the Synod, but only in so far as these apply to the District and only within the boundaries of their Districts.

7. The District Presidents shall, moreover, especially exercise supervision over the doctrine, life, and administration of office of the pastors and teachers of their District and acquaint themselves with the religious conditions of the congregations of their District. To this end they shall visit and, according as they deem it necessary, hold investigations in the congregations. Their assistants in this work are the visitors, who, therefore, shall regularly make their reports to the District President.

8. In accordance with the By-Laws of the Synod the District Presidents are empowered to suspend from membership, until the next regular meeting of the Synod, pastors, be they voting or merely advisory mem-

bers of the Synod, as also professors and teachers, for persistently adhering to false doctrine or for having given public offense by an ungodly life, and also to publish such proceedings.

9. Furthermore, the District Presidents shall —

a. See to it that all resolutions of the Synod which concern the Districts are made known to the Districts and are carried out by them;

b. Submit an annual report of their administration to the President of the Synod and, in general, permit him to obtain all necessary insight into their official activities as District Presidents;

c. Perform, either in person, or by proxy, the ecclesiastical ordination of the candidates for the ministry assigned to their Districts, the installation of such, as well as the installation of the candidates for the office of schoolteacher and of all ministers and teachers called by the congregations in their Districts;

d. Sign all examination papers and certificates of ordination and, in general, all official papers and documents of their District.

10. The meetings of the Districts of the Synod are composed of the following: —

A. VOTING REPRESENTATIVES.

The pastors of such congregations as hold voting membership in the Synod, and the lay delegates elected and deputed by these congregations, shall be voting representatives.

B. ADVISORY MEMBERS.

Advisory members are: —

1. Pastors whose congregations do not hold membership in the Synod;

2. Assistant pastors;

3. Ministers without a charge;

4. Professors at the educational institutions;

5. Teachers of parochial schools;

6. Candidates for the office of the ministry or for the office of parochial school teacher.

11. The Districts, when legally incorporated, are represented before the State by a Board of Directors, composed of the President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer of the District, which Board, however, may be constituted otherwise.

12. The Districts are independent in the administration of affairs which concern their District only, it being understood, however, that such administration shall always serve the interests of the Synod.

13. The regular sessions of the Districts are held in those years in which no regular session of the Synod is held. Only the Synod has the right to make an exception to this rule.

14. For the legal holding of the sessions of the Districts a constitutional convocation of such sessions and the presence of at least one-third of the voting members, represented by at least one of their respective representatives (pastor or lay delegate) are required.

15. In cases of urgent necessity the District President is empowered to convene special sessions of his District; he must, however, previously have obtained consent of at least a majority of the voting members of the District after having informed them and the President of the Synod of the purpose of the intended special session.

Article XIII. — Expulsion from the Synod.

1. Members who act contrary to the confession laid down in Article II and to the conditions of membership laid down in Article VI, or persist in an offensive conduct, shall, after previous futile admonition, be expelled from the Synod.

2. Such expulsion is executed as a rule, by the Districts of the Synod; yet those so expelled have the right of appeal to the Synod.

3. If the member expelled is a pastor or teacher in a congregation of the Synod, such congregation, unless it has already done so, is held to depose him from office

and to deal with him in accordance with the Word of God, notwithstanding an appeal. If it persistently refuses to do so, the respective District is to deal with it. If all negotiations and admonitions fail of their purpose, such congregation forfeits its membership in the Synod.

4. Because of their expulsion those so expelled forfeit their membership and all share in the property of the Synod. The latter holds good also with respect to those who for any reason themselves sever their connection with the Synod.

Article XIV.

Changes in, and Amendments to, the Constitution.

1. Changes in the constitution and amendments thereto may be made, provided they do not conflict with the provisions laid down in Article II and in Article VI.

2. Only written motions referring to changes and amendments are to be received by the assembled members of the Synod for discussion, and a separate vote must be taken on each such motion. When the vote is taken, at least two-thirds of the voting representatives must vote in favor of the motion of its adoption as a resolution.

3. Such resolution shall be submitted by the President and the Secretary of the Synod within three months after the close of the synodical convention, by means of three announcements in the official synodical organs, to the vote of the congregations of the Synod.

4. After at least a majority of the congregations have registered their votes in writing with the Secretary of the Synod, the result of the vote shall be announced by the Secretary through the official organs of the Synod. In case of acceptance the change or amendment thereby becomes effective.

(30 [1917], 86—92. 31 [1920], 82—88.)